

Idaho 44 Corridor Preservation Study

Welcome

The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) and the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) are working together to identify future transportation needs along the Idaho 44 corridor from I-84 to Eagle Road.





Speaker's Notes

Welcome. Thank you for coming. We know your time is precious and we appreciate you sharing it with us tonight.

The Idaho 44 Corridor Preservation Study is an effort to identify the future transportation needs for the corridor through the year 2030. The corridor begins at the interstate and ends at the Eagle alternate route at Ballentyne Road, just west of Eagle Road.

As the slide says, the project is a partnership between COMPASS and ITD. I'd like to introduce Don Matson, planner and project manager at COMPASS. Don and I have been working closely together on this project.

For those of you who don't know who COMPASS is - COMPASS is an acronym for Community Planning Association of South West Idaho. COMPASS is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). An MPO is a transportation policy-making board made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities. Federal legislation requires urban areas with a population of 50,000 or more to have an MPO in order to receive federal transportation dollars. COMPASS is the MPO for Ada and Canyon Counties. Mayor McKeever sits on the COMPASS board. The board meets monthly to discuss transportation issues in the Treasure Valley.

In your packet you received a handout about COMPASS. I highly recommend you read it. It is important for the citizens of Ada and Canyon County understand how transportation planning decisions are being made.



Speaker's notes continued

Why are COMPASS and ITD working together on this project?

The corridor covers five local government jurisdictions and two county highway districts. COMPASS is the umbrella organization that brings us together.

COMPASS prioritizes transportation projects. ITD has a board-approved five year transportation program, as does COMPASS. Those two programs are required to match exactly in the first three years. In other words, the program decisions are made jointly. ITD no longer makes unilateral decisions on project programming in the metropolitan area.

COMPASS is responsible for the long-range transportation plan. COMPASS manages the demographic forecasting, the planning level modeling and the air quality modeling for Ada and Canyon counties.

The project is a preservation project, which means we need a strong collaboration with local government so the land use is consistent with future highway plans.

The study will develop:

- **A regional vision for the highway**
- **An implementation plan**
- **An access management plan**
- **An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**
- **Analysis of a Middleton Alternate Route**





Speaker's Notes

Our task is to develop an improvement plan for the highway. This plan includes an engineering report called a concept, which includes scope of work, cost estimates, design standards and alternatives analysis from an engineering side. The environmental analysis will review impacts of the action on the natural and human environment.

We will do an access management plan. This is a presentation by itself and we touched on it at the last meeting. If there is a desire we could return and talk more about that.

An important part of this project is the Middleton Alternate Route.

Purpose of Today's Workshop

- **Focus on the Middleton Alternate Route**
- **Gather input from Middleton community on:**
 - ❑ **Need for an alternate route**
 - ❑ **Possible alternate route locations**
 - ❑ **Environmental issues**
 - ❑ **Your concerns and comments**





Speaker's Notes

We were here in 2006. The last meeting was about the entire Idaho 44 corridor. We did not get a strong sense of community support for an alternate route. Alternate routes can sometimes be controversial projects. They are on new alignments and often have significant impacts. They are a costly investment. Because of the importance of this project we wanted to know if there is strong community consensus on an alternate route. We sent a letter of invitation to this meeting to every citizen in Middleton.

Do you support the concept of an alternate route? If so, then we ask you - do you support the city's proposed location south of town? The city has been planning for the alternate route since the year 2000. It is identified in the comprehensive plan and in their transportation planning. If you support an alternate route, but you don't agree with the location, please tell us where else you think we should look.

We also want to hear about environmental issues that are not obvious but that you may have knowledge of, such as historical resources. Perhaps you know of a remnant of the old trolley. And we want to hear your concerns and comments. We also want to answer your questions. We will not have time for a Q&A, so as you are listening, jot down your questions, and later post them at a station we have prepared. We will answer all those questions and post them on our web. Those who need a copy by regular mail, please leave your mailing address.

We would like to hear any constructive solutions you can offer.

It is important to note, this is not a vote. We are not going to count all the yeas and nays. Imagine you were a supervisor and you needed to make an important business decision that impacted the lives of your staff. You would want to consult, get feedback, information, and perspectives from the staff. You would need to combine this with many other factors to come up with the preferred solution.



Study Need



Rapid growth projected for 2030

- **42 percent population increase in Ada and Canyon counties**
- **70 percent increase in city of Middleton's population**
 - 8,700 people in 3,000 households
- **140 percent traffic increase through Middleton**

**Source: Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho*



Speaker's Notes

Right now, almost 7,000 vehicles use highway 44 every day between Dewey and Hawthorne. So do you need an alternate route?

The COMPASS forecast shows a 42 percent population increase in Canyon and Ada county by the year 2030. Middleton is forecast to outpace that growth rate with a 70 percent population increase. This translates to a traffic increase of 140 percent on highway 44 in Middleton.

Forecasting growth is like trying to predict the stock market; part science, part art, mostly luck. There are many who say the population forecast is too low, or not in the right places. It is a tool. We recognize it has limitations.

Study Need - Traffic

For example: Dewey Avenue to Hawthorne Drive

- **2007—6,800 cars a day**
- **2030—15,700 cars a day with no improvements**
- **2030—4,800 cars a day with an alternate route**





Speaker's notes



So next time you are driving, imagine twice as many cars on the highway. And then add a few more. You are looking at a best guess of traffic in the year 2030.

If Middleton doesn't have an alternate route, we will ultimately need to consider widening the existing road to four lanes through downtown.

Year 2030 on Main Street

- No alternate route – may:
 - ❑ Cause bumper-to-bumper, stop-and-go traffic
 - ❑ Eliminate of on-street parking
 - ❑ Make turning into businesses and side streets time consuming
- With an alternate route, traffic will likely be similar to today's conditions.





Speaker's notes

Today's toddlers, with some luck, will be gainfully employed by 2030. What will their commute be like?

Without an alternate route they will see high levels of congestion, the parking will be sacrificed for a travel lane, turning movements will be difficult.

But perhaps a more important question is, without an alternate route - what will downtown be like?

I'm not trying to sell you an alternate route. It is an important decision made with input from your community. Your elected officials support it and have worked hard to plan for it.



Alternate Route Impacts on the Community

- **Alternate route plans often generate local concern about impacts on:**
 - ❑ **Local commerce**
 - ❑ **Development**
 - ❑ **Land use and general quality of life**
- **Research shows alternate routes:**
 - ❑ **have little adverse impact to businesses**
 - ❑ **stabilize traffic through the downtown core**
 - ❑ **stabilize retail areas**
 - ❑ **bring overall benefit to cities**



Speaker's notes

Concerns about economic impacts to the business community are important and legitimate. I reviewed several studies that are available online. I found that each community is unique, that generally communities had an initial unhappy transition as commerce readjusted, then stabilized and overall there was a long-term economic benefit.

Success was related to the level of planning and economic development done in advance of the bypass.

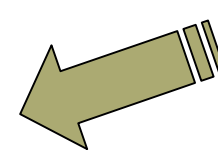
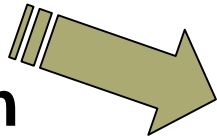
If there are local business concerns, it may be beneficial to form a task force to share the study information and discuss those issues. The city of Eagle is an example of a city with a downtown bypass that has a very healthy business climate today.

If there are concerns about business impacts, perhaps a task force to discuss issues could be organized to coordinate with this project.



National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process

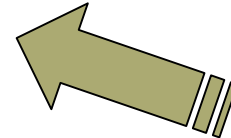
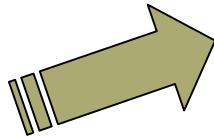
**Public
Participation**



**Environmental
Analysis**

**ENVIROMENTAL
IMPACT
STATEMENT**

**Corridor
Preservation
Committee**



Engineering

For more information:

<http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/index.asp>



Speaker's notes

Many of you have heard of environmental documents. Those weighty environmental documents that take years to produce. That process is more than a report about endangered squirrels and slick spotted peppergrass. It really is about a decision making process.

To use federal transportation dollars we need to do an environmental impact statement for this project. As the slide shows, the process brings the public, our elected officials, the environmental and engineering components together. The signatory on the document is the federal highway administration. So they make the final decision. The document needs to be legally sufficient.

We need to look at a range of alternative solutions in the document. In this case we will analyze a 'do nothing alternative', widen existing highway, look at a new alignment south of town and add any others based on the feedback we get tonight.

I've been asked who is in charge - ITD, COMPASS, the city, the developers? As said, the NEPA document will decide where the route goes. The desire of the city's elected officials to have an alternate route does not by itself influence the outcome. But the city has managed to achieve a very difficult task. As new developments have come along, they have preserved a corridor in those developments to accommodate a future highway. In doing so, they minimize many of the potential impacts of a new alignment. I know of no other city in Southwest Idaho that has done that. It is very proactive.

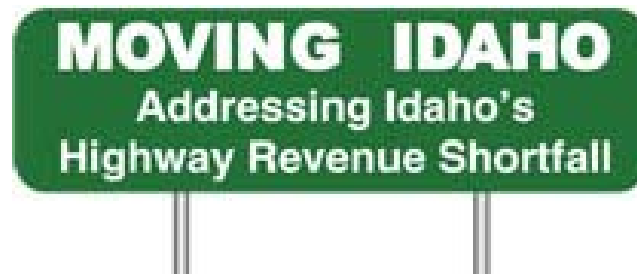
Some of the major impacts we will be looking at are historic resources, wetlands, noise and impacts to residential and business properties. With some exception, we cannot purchase right-of-way until the Federal Highway Administration issues a record of decision on the Environmental Impact Statement. The EIS is scheduled for Spring 2009.



Highway Revenue Shortfall



- **Widening of Idaho 44 and U.S. 20/26 is not programmed or funded.**
- **No estimate of the funding timeline is available.**
- **The immediate goal is to preserve and acquire right-of-way.**





Speaker's notes

In the packet you received there is a handout that discusses our current funding challenges. Many people think we get money from property taxes. Not true. The state highways get no funds from property taxes.

The bulk of our transportation dollars come from the federal government and they come from gas taxes. Federal appropriations have remained flat while we continue to grow. We are falling further and further behind.

Outside of the projects on the interstate, we are in a maintenance mode, keeping bridges standing and roads from returning to gravel.

We have a few traffic signals and some turn bays projects, but no major expansion projects other than on the interstate.

Unless something changes in the revenue stream, I don't anticipate we will have funds to begin widening U.S. 20/26 and S.H. 44 corridors for at least the next seven7 years.

This is provided as an explanation for why S.H.44 and U.S. 20/26 are not yet programmed for construction, why we don't even have an estimate for when widening could begin, and why our focus is on preservation of the right-of-way so we don't preclude future expansion.



Alternate Route Location



Many issues need to be considered in the alternate route location:

- **Prior planning**
 - **COMPASS/City of Middleton Traffic Circulation Study 2000**
 - **City of Middleton's Comprehensive Plan**
 - **City of Middleton current draft transportation plan**
- **Environmental impacts**
- **Social/economic impacts**



Speaker's notes

As you go to the comment areas, think about what you think is the best alignment for an alternate route, if you think you should have one. Some of the major constraints to think about are displacements of homes and businesses, impacts to wetland areas and impacts to historic resources.

The dotted line on the map showing the city's preferred location is intended to convey some vagueness. It is not a precise line yet, and would have room for some modifications. If you would like to recommend other locations or revisions please explain why you think it should go there instead of here.

Some folks have expressed support for a major loop route to the north from the freeway to highway 16. This is well out of the scope of this project, particularly in light of our current funding constraints.

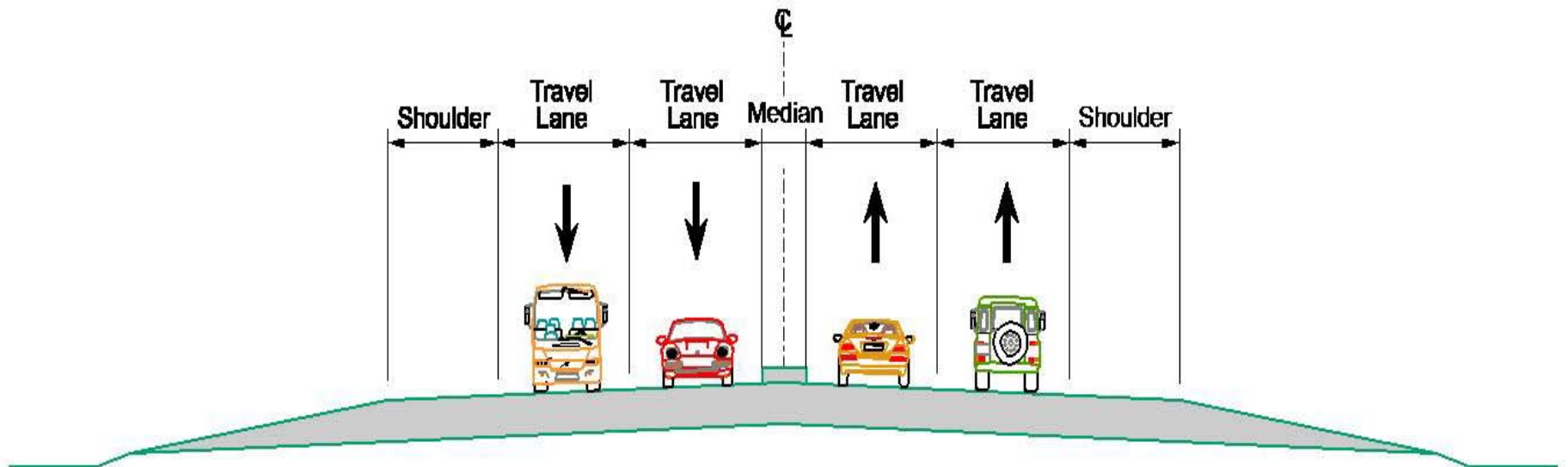
This last slides show a four lane typical section with alternative median treatments.

With that we will begin the comment activity that is planned. If you are a property owner with property close to the route preferred by the city, please come and talk to me. I would like to meet you and get an understanding of your concerns.

Thank you. Please leave your thoughts behind in writing. Watch for a study newsletter. We will be back in spring 2008.

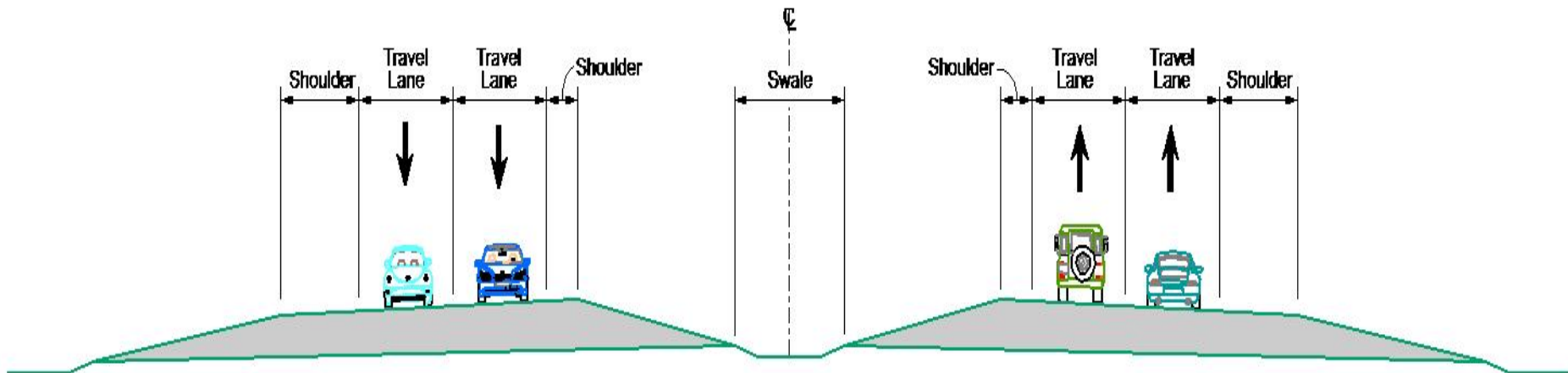
Possible Alternate Route Design

UNDIVIDED HIGHWAY



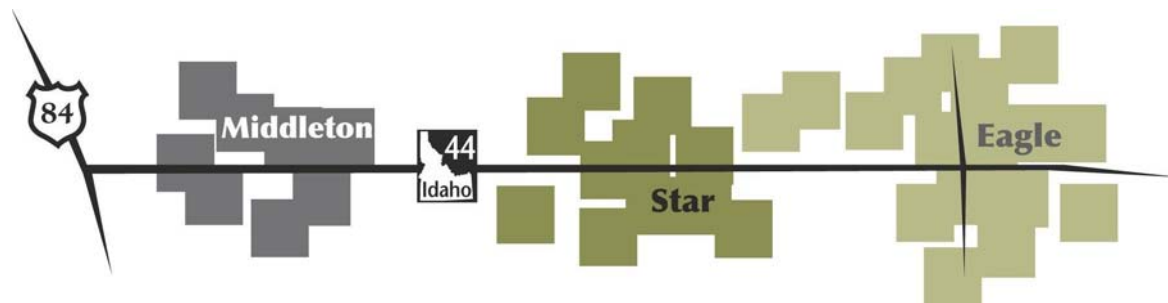
Possible Alternate Route Design

DIVIDED HIGHWAY



Thank you for attending

- **COMPASS and ITD appreciate your comments and will consider them in the alternate route analysis**
- **Watch for a study newsletter**
- **Next public meeting expected in Spring 2008**



Workshop Questions

In your small groups, discuss the following questions:

- **Is an alternate route needed?**
- **What are your issues and concerns?**
- **Where are possible locations?**
- **Are you aware of any environmental issues?**

